Marc Parlange
Can’t Wait to Meet You

URI’s 12th president has lived and worked around the globe. Now, he’s ready to roll up his sleeves and lead URI into its next transformative decade.
First Place
“BABY BLUE MAXIMA CLAM”
Michael Corso ’24, aquaculture and fisheries science major
This photo was taken at Love the Reef in Wilmington, Mass., where Corso works and will conduct an independent study. At Love the Reef, Corso says, “coral and other invertebrates are grown and propagated in life-support tank systems, holding hundreds of gallons of artificial seawater. In the wild, a clam like this may live for over 200 years. But captive propagation and growth may be the only hope of survival for many integral reef species, including giant clams. By continuing research and development of new sustainable aquaculture methods, we may be able to protect even the most vulnerable creatures.”

URI’s fourth annual Research and Scholarship Photo Contest attracted a stunning collection of photos from URI students, staff, and faculty.
The contest provides a unique opportunity for our researchers and scholars to convey their ideas and work, as well as their unique perspectives, through the images they capture.
We’re proud to share this year’s top-placing photos, which represent a range of disciplines—from biology to nonviolence and peace studies. They include work by undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty and staff, and they reinforce that time-tested adage: “A picture is worth a thousand words.”
Honorable Mention
“THE AMERICAN WOODCOCK PROJECT”
Justin Moore ’21, wildlife and conservation biology major
This photo, taken at the Frosty Drew Observatory and Sky Theater at Ninigret Park in Charlestown, Rhode Island, was part of Gilmore’s preparation and research for a project called “The 79 Moons of Jupiter.” The project is a live, audio-visual installation and performance piece, for which Gilmore and his colleague, Jacob Richman (video and filmmaking instructor), won a URI “Winner” grant. Gilmore says, “I am seated here operating my synthesizers, the constellation Orion (my 10-year-old son’s name is Orion, too) just off my right shoulder, and the moon in a waxing crescent phase. The wisp of red light artifact from the long exposure intrigues me, and on a personal level, felt symbolic of a father passing along his quest of creative adventures to his son.”

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“OFF THE SHOULDER OF ORION”
Kevin Gilmore, adjunct instructor, art and art history
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“POLYCARPA AND CAULERPA”
Erin Borbee, doctoral student in biological and environmental sciences
This photo of ink-spot sea squirts (Polycarpa aureate) and sea grapes (Caulerpa racemosa), was taken on a reef in Misool, Indonesia. Borbee says, “URI’s Lane Lab and Humphries Lab collaborate with the Marine Biodiversity and Biosystematics Lab at Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia, using environmental DNA (eDNA) to evaluate biodiversity in coral reef ecosystems across Indonesia. The water and sediment around the organisms are full of microbial life, as well as fragments of DNA, from fish and invertebrates that live here or pass through. We capture and sequence that DNA to see the diversity on a reef and begin to look at factors that may influence that diversity.”

Second Place
“SERENITY”
Thupten Tendhar, coordinator, URI Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies
Tendhar, a Level III Kingian nonviolence trainer and former longtime member of the Drepung Loseling Monastery in South India, says that in his role at URI, he teaches “peace of mind and the interconnected nature of phenomena. This photo, taken at Indian Lake in Wakefield, Rhode Island, shows how humans can learn, enjoy, and derive a positive impact from nature to feel peaceful and enhance our sense of belonging, realizing that we are all a small part of a bigger universe.”

Third Place
“UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH A CECROPIA MOTH”
Gillian Mikowski ’23, biology and psychology double major
Mikowski, who works as a student lab assistant at URI’s Biocontrol Lab in the URI greenhouses, where this photo was taken, says, “The cecropia moth (Hyalophora cecropia) is the largest moth native to North America, with an average wingspan of 5–7 inches! They are very docile, and this guy posed for me for quite some time. Rearing of H. cecropia moths is part of the non-target research done at the URI Biocontrol Lab to assist with USDA spotted lantern fly biological control research.”

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SPOTLIGHT ON ROTC
URI’s ROTC program has launched the careers of many accomplished military personnel. Today’s cadets are carrying on a tradition of teamwork, leadership, and excellence.

MEET MARC PARLANGE
URI’s incoming president, Marc Parlange, brings an expansive world view to URI. He can’t wait to join the Rhody community.

EDUCATORS WITH SUPERPOWERS
Soljane Martinez ’98 shares the stories of how she and three of her URI classmates are battling the injustices of inequitable education.

AT THE MERCY OF NATURE
Natural disasters like tsunamis, volcanoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes spot fear and fascination. URI scientists are working to help prevent and mitigate the damage they cause.

PHOTOS: EVAN PAGANO; GRACE KELLY; COURTESY MARC PARLANGE; NORA LEWIS; NOAA
Left: Evan Pagano ’15, M.B.A. ’19, captured this scene of a horseshoe crab in the surf at Camp Cronin in Narragansett, R.I. “Horseshoe crabs,” Pagano says, “make their way to the shore in large groups each spring. These prehistoric creatures crawl out of the ocean according to the moon cycle to dig holes in the sand and lay their eggs.”
FROM THE EDITOR
In the last issue, we wished our outgoing president, David M. Dooley, farewell. URI is a better place today because of his tireless efforts. In this issue, we introduce you to our incoming president, Marc Parlange. We look forward to welcoming him and working with him as he takes the helm of our beloved University.

This issue is jam-packed with stories you shouldn’t miss. One of my favorites is Harrington School adjunct faculty member Betty Cotter’s essay (page 9) about a school librarian, Roberta Sabella ’69, M.S., ’73. I share Cotter’s love for libraries, and URI has one of the best library and information studies programs around. Look for a story about URI’s alumni librarians, and learn why librarians are so important today more than ever—in the fall issue of the magazine.

—Barbara Caron, Editor-in-Chief

FOR THE BIRDS

I enjoyed reading “An Avian Affection” (spring 2021). I am pleased that URI ventured in a strong ornithological program, as there was none when I was a grad student in zoology (1967-69). Professors Patton and McWilliams, and research assistant Charles Clarkson add wonderful dimensions—as does the Kingston Wildlife Research Station (not present in the ’60s). My M.S. in avian research (advised by a mammalogist) at URI followed by a Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, led me to a 35-year career in bird research at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, then to the University of Virginia, where, as a research professor, I advised Charles Clarkson for his Ph.D. program. So now I enjoy two connections with URI.

—R. Michael Erwin, M.S. ’69

THANK YOU, URI!
Compliments to everyone involved in bringing the University of Rhode Island Magazine to first-class publication status. I find it enjoyable and uplifting to read about the activities, academic accomplishments, research, and activism of faculty, students, and alumni—especially with such broad reach with national and international impact. It is amazing to see how URI has grown and developed through the years.

During my career as a civil engineer, I was fortunate to travel and work in the Caribbean, Europe, South America, Africa, western U.S., and Hawaii, with many wonderful and unique experiences for which I express gratitude to URI.

—Tom Pizzo ’70

HONORING HEROIC WOMEN
My heart was warmed by “Nursing Heritage” (spring 2021) and the photo of Diane Healy Dexter ’50. My aunt, Annette Frisella ’52, is also a survivor of that very first class. In her room, she keeps a photo (above) of the pinning ceremony for those brave young ladies. I believe there are 2 or 3 other feisty old ladies from that amazing class still kicking around, and who still send Christmas cards!

Annette would love to receive cards from any of her URI friends, especially those docs and nurses who knew her as “J et.” Her address is Watson Fields, 201 Watson Rd, Dover, NH 03820. Or send email to me at tj寺院@gmail.com. Thank you for publishing the article to honor heroic women from our past.

—Dr. Terry Vanderlude

MISSED OPPORTUNITY
Opening the spring 2021 issue, I was excited to see a lengthy article on the evolution of nursing. I work with nurses in hospitals and other facilities across Massachusetts, applying the journalism skills I learned at URI to help nurses communicate with each other and with the public.

The vast majority of nurses I talk to every day provide direct patient care, in places such as intensive care units, emergency departments, medical-surgical units, operating rooms, schools, home care settings and long-term care facilities. Their experiences, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be harrowing, beautiful, and frustrating. These hardworking nurses are powerful advocates for their patients and often speak passionately about modern challenges such as just-in-time staffing models that lead to unsafe patient assignments, workplace violence, and the closure of local services by large health care systems. I was surprised to see critical topics like these go uncovered in the article. It was a missed opportunity not to include more voices of frontline nurses.

—Joel Markman ’88 Associate Director of Communications, Massachusetts Nurses Association

POETRY PARODY

Normaly I read URI Magazine from front to back, article by article, in leisure moments over a month or two. But when the spring 2021 issue arrived I saw the cover story, “Why Poetry Now?” I opened it immediately, turned to that, and read it. As a retired engineer who fancied himself a poet (with one book of poetry published), I found the article to be excellent—captivating and illuminating. Of interest was that Professor Jones taught Leigh Hunt’s “Jenny Kiss’d Me,” as I’ve written a parody of that story. “Hunter Licked Me” Best of luck to all the poets associated with URI.

Hunter Licked Me
Hunter licked me on the nose, showing me his deep affection Whimpering, this dachshund knows who provides food and protection. Tell me that my poems won’t sell, that no muse has ever picked me. Call me crazy, but then yell “Hunter licked me.”

—David A. Todd ’74

Correction
With apologies to William Blake, we cited Blake’s poem “The Tyger” as “The Tiger” in the spring 2021 issue. Our apologies for the error.

—Author
Currents

Gulf Stream Changes Predict Ocean Warming

The Northwest Atlantic Shelf is one of the fastest-changing regions in the global ocean, currently experiencing marine heat waves, altered fisheries, and a surge in sea-level rise. GSO researcher Antonio Gonçalves Neto, Ph.D. ’20, was lead author of a recently published paper in Communications Earth & Environment describing the findings of a URI research team that studied the changes. Gonçalves Neto explained that when the Gulf Stream migrates closer to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, as it did in 2008, “it blocks the southward transport of the Labrador Current that would otherwise provide cold, fresh, oxygen-rich water to the North American shelf.” URI Associate Professor Jaime Palter, co-author and Gonçalves Neto’s mentor, noted that these findings help explain why the last decade was the hottest on record at the Northeast U.S. and Canada, as the delivery of cold water to the region choked off by the presence of the Gulf Stream.

The team noted the important finding that the satellite-observed signature of the Gulf Stream’s position relative to the Grand Banks precedes sub-surface shelf-warming by over a year. “By monitoring satellite observations for changes near the Grand Banks, we can predict changes coming to the Northeast U.S. shelf with potentially enough lead time to inform fishery management decision-making,” said URI graduate student and co-author Joe Langan.

Teaching Chickens New Tricks

Animal behavior students know that animal training skills could make or break their competitive position at a zoo or aquarium after graduating. Junior Jessica Weidemann learned those skills in her advanced animal behavior class at URI’s Peckham Farm. The most challenging part of the class? Training a chicken.

Chickens are notoriously difficult to train. Weidemann, one of 13 students in Assistant Professor Justin Richardson’s class, trained her assigned chicken to select a particular card from a set of various colors. “You can train a dog without knowing what you’re doing because they’re eager to please humans,” Richard said. “Chickens don’t care about you, and they’re naturally fearful of you. It takes patience and attention to detail to train the birds.” Senior Mia Luzetti, who began a job as an animal care specialist at Racine Zoo in Wisconsin in April 2021, says the class helped her land her job. “During my interviews, I was able to discuss relevant conditioning and positive reinforcement, not only from a place of understanding the topic but from real training experience, which many facilities were impressed by.” Students from last year’s class found jobs or internships at the U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program in San Diego, Sea World in San Antonio, Coral World in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Buttonwood Park Zoo in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and elsewhere.

A School Librarian Who Made a Difference

School librarian Roberta Sabella Mansfield, M.L.S. ’72, did more than just help Betty Cotter find books. She fostered Cotter’s love of literature and helped her find a sense of belonging.

By Betty J. Cotter

At home, I organized my own small collection of ScholasticARBAbibliographies into a homemade library. My mother bought me a date stamp and I fashioned circulation slips out of cardboard. Using my mother’s manual Royal typewriter, I created stick- ers for the books’ spines.

Sixth grade came to a close too quickly. Ahead was the mysterious and frightening prospect of the junior-senior high school. I was sad to leave behind Miss Sabella. She had recognized my love of literature and given it space to grow. She rescued me from the playground’s tortures and gave me a role model to follow.

That June, she mailed me a letter. “Thank you very much for your picture,” she wrote. “I hope it stuck up on your bulletin board, and I can’t help but always smile back at you. I really can’t tell you how much your work in the library helped me this year. To tell you the truth, it was much too quiet up there before you began to come up! I’ll be looking forward to your visit next September.”

Almost, that visit never came to pass, because she left, presumably to take a better job elsewhere. Over the years, as I became a newpaper reporter, wrote books, and taught literature, I often thought of her influence.

For the kids who have all this reading really needs to be seen for who he or she is. Roberta Sabella Mansfield did that for me, and I am grateful.

Betty J. Cotter is an adjunct faculty member in URI’s Harrington School of Communications. Roberta Sabella Mansfield, M.L.S. ’72, worked as a librarian in the Coventry public schools for 39 years.

This story was originally published in The Providence Journal on Oct. 31, 2020.
S ometimes, seemingly disparate decisions have a design that comes clear only in hindsight.

Such is true for Julia Santini ‘21, who is entering Brown University’s Warren Alpert Medical School this summer. Santini was admitted to Brown through the Early Identification Program, a cooperative venture between Brown, URI, and a select few other Rhode Island schools. The program exists, in part, to increase opportunities for Rhode Island students to pursue medical careers.

In 2020, medical schools nationwide saw a 20 percent rise in applications—a phenomenon the media has linked to Dr. Anthony Fauci’s prominence during the pandemic. Journalists and medical schools alike have taken to calling it the “Fauci effect.” And Santini has something in common with America’s most recognizable doctor, who was a classics major as an undergraduate. Like Dr. Fauci, Santini is equally at home in the STEM disciplines and the humanities.

Initially a biology major in the Honors Program, Santini added a second major, sociology, and then a third, Italian. By her sophomore year, she’d decided on a career in medicine. “There are many careers you can go into with a biology major,” she says. “But I always had health care in the back of my mind.”

“In the beginning, it seemed like my three fields of study were diverse and segmented, but they’re actually interconnected. I see them really as three different perspectives on humanity.”

For her honors project and thesis, Santini investigated home-birthing practices in the United States and around the globe. “Women’s health is something that I’ve become increasingly interested in,” she says. “I did an independent study looking at global perspectives on reproduction as part of my sociology degree.”

Santini was president of URI’s pre-med club, secretary of URI Women in STEM, and, pre-pandemic, was involved in Alternative Spring Break, a student-run global service organization. She also led a student group working with Habitat for Humanity in Guatemala. As a pre-health advisor for URI’s Pre-Health Professions Advising Program, Santini talked with incoming students about the program, as well as courses and clubs they might be interested in joining.

Santini is still considering what area of medicine she’ll specialize in. She’s interested in primary care and family medicine.

“Part of the reason why I’m interested in family medicine is that that specialty allows you to take a holistic view of people and the community.”

—Marybeth Reddy-McGreen
Tradition Meets Innovation

This fall, the University’s campuses will fully welcome back students, parents, alumni, and friends. Members of our community can revisit their favorite spots, and alumni coming back will find the familiar, traditional aspects of campus much the same. URI will also resume an ambitious plan for growth, as part of Big Ideas: Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island. These new and upcoming projects tie into the campaign priorities of the URI Learning Experience and Strategic Opportunities, providing cutting-edge facilities to inspire students and faculty.

The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering

The world-class facility that first welcomed students in 2019 was open for less than one year when COVID shut down much of campus. Named to honor the longstanding support from Michael J. ’78, Hon. ’08 and Elizabeth C. Fascitelli, including a $10 million gift for research equipment, The Fascitelli Center will put its cutting-edge labs, collaborative learning spaces, and samt hurlin ‘Babe’ Gertz Café back to full use this fall.

Harrington School of Communication and Media

The Harrington Hub—located in Ranger Hall, provides professional environments for audio and video recording as well as emerging digital media. The newly renovated broadcast studio in Chafee Hall served a critical role for faculty and University leaders to deliver recorded messages to members of the URI community learning and working remotely. The Hub is state-of-the-art thanks to contributions from Richard J. ’73, Hon. ’92 and Jean Harrington.

Fine Arts Center

Plans for the University’s newest building initiative include 82,000 square feet of space for the music and art departments. Along with a new exterior, the space will feature updated studios as well as new areas for digital art, graphic design, photography, and videography. The building will also offer a new lobby in front of the Robert E. Will Theatre; improved access to Studio A; the smaller black box theater; and two new modern acting classrooms. Work has started and will take about two years.

Ballentine Hall

The College of Business has drawn up plans for Ballentine Hall, including 7,000 square feet of new space and 13,000 square feet of renovated space. The College has seen growing enrollment and looks to incorporate the latest technology used by the world’s leading employers. The Alfred J. Verrecchia Center for Business Excellence and the Kent and Diane Finnin Center for Student Success will each prepare students to be future-ready and collaborate as they would in a business environment. Other improvements include a business analytics and AI lab and an advanced financial trading room.

Narragansett Bay Campus

The Narragansett Bay Campus’ Master Plan sets ambitious goals for upgraded facilities to advance world-renowned ocean research and graduate education. Improvements over a 10-year period will include a pier to accommodate the new research vessel coming to URI in 2023, an ocean technology design laboratory, and a designated center for marine operations. Construction is scheduled to begin on the new pier in the fall, and the design lab is slated for completion in 2024.

Solovief Family Basketball Practice Facility

The $8 million project has received tremendous support from alumni and friends, including a lead gift from Stefan Soloviev and his family, to transform West Gymnasium into an advanced practice facility for the men’s and women’s basketball teams. Student-athletes will have 24-hour access to training and technology to enhance their experience and refine their craft.

Plans for Commencement were complicated, as COVID-19 restrictions changed rapidly throughout the spring. In the end, URI held its 135th Commencement— in-person—at Meade Stadium on May 21–23. Each college held a separate ceremony, allowing two family members per student to attend. Events were livestreamed and recorded for those not in attendance. A prerecorded main ceremony included a keynote address from Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, who uncovered the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Addresses were also given by URI’s 2021 student Commencement speakers, Edhaya Thennarasu ’21 and Frank Martinez, M.A. ’21.

—Dave Lavoie ’79, M.P.A. ’87

COMMENCEMENT COMES TO LIFE

URI’s newest alumni walked across the stage at Meade Stadium in May. Get to know our student Commencement speakers and the Class of 2021 by the numbers.

EDHAYA THERNASRANU ’21

Undergraduate student speaker Edhaya Thennarasu ’21 received her B.A. in communication and media studies with a minor in theater. Originally from Chennai, India, Thennarasu had all but given up on pursuing higher education, finding school too mechanical and too focused on grades. She says URI changed that.

In her address, Thennarasu mourned the loss of snow days due to remote learning— “RIP snow days,” she said. And she praised the URI community’s response to the recent Black Lives Matter protests: “When I saw people in this community taking to the streets to support their brothers and sisters of color in a time of unbearable injustice, I learned that education means standing up for others and what you believe in, even if it is way out of your comfort zone.”

What’s next for Thennarasu? “My dream,” she says, “would be to work in the entertainment or journalism world, for a company like Disney.”

Thennarasu’s speech ended on an inspirational note: “Today is a testament that every single one of you here are slihgtos. If you are pulled back by the hardships of time, society, injustice, and circumstance, know that it is only to launch you forward, with unstoppable force and energy to make an indelible mark of excellence in the future.”

FRANK MARTINEZ, M.A. ’21

Graduate School student speaker Frank Martinez, M.A. ’21, received his master’s degree in international relations. Originally from Cuba, he earned his bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Havana, and lived in Washington, D.C., Miami, and Anaheim, California, before coming to URI.

In his address, Martinez said, “I have faith in the future. I was born and raised in Cuba and came to the United States in 2015. If you had told me six years ago that today I would be delivering this speech after graduating from a master’s program, I would have never believed you.

“What we have to learn to do,” he said, “is to embrace different cultures and languages. My training in international relations and diplomacy at URI gave me the tools to not only embrace different cultures but to thrive in them.”

Martinez will attend Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University for a second master’s degree.

“I see myself working for the State Department or the United Nations in a policy-making role,” he says. “I would work anywhere in the world where I could contribute to the well-being of society, a country, or people.”
Congratulations Class of 2021!

Commencement ceremonies were held throughout the weekend of May 21–23 at Meade Stadium. The evening light was fittingly dramatic as College of Engineering graduates received their diplomas on Friday, May 21.

PHOTO: SEAN MCVEIGH
Parlange has advanced global scholarly research, navigated financial challenges, built strong industry partnerships and developed a depth of experience in creating more diverse and inclusive communities, especially for the most historically marginalized members of our society.
—Thomas M. Ryan ’75, Hon. ’99, URI trustee and chair of the presidential search committee

“Everest is treasured very highly as a unique monument for the globe. It’s kind of sad to see very high concentrations at some places on the mountain. We say, Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, but we leave chemicals.”
—Rainer Lehmann, professor of oceanography and director of the URI Superfund Research Center on Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

On the value of increased fat stores and the many fascinating ways birds’ bodies change to prepare for seasonal migration:

“Flying is the most energy-intensive form of locomotion. But it’s also more efficient if you want to go farther, faster. You actually get better fuel economy when you use fat as fuel for a flying animal compared to a runner.”
—Scott McWilliams, professor of wildlife ecology and physiology

On how the pandemic has tested long-held notions that work is best performed to reconnect, to be in touch with other employees when they need to be.
—Aimee Phelps, Ph.D. ’15, teaching professor of management and human resources

On the findings of outside researchers who reported the existence of “forever chemicals” and other pollutants around the summit of Mount Everest:

“Everest is treasured very highly as a unique monument for the globe. It’s kind of sad to see very high concentrations at some places on the mountain. We say, Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, but we leave chemicals.”
—Rainer Lehmann, professor of oceanography and director of the URI Superfund Research Center on Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

On early small-scale efforts suggesting that dogs can be trained to sniff out COVID infections:

“There seems to be evidence that COVID patients might emit ammonia at trace levels that dogs could be sniffing.”
—Otto Gregorczyk ’75, M.S. ’78, professor of chemical engineering

On a paper that, if proven correct, would not only challenge Einstein’s theory of general relativity but also prove the existence of near-extremal black holes:

“We would love to know if nature would even allow for such a beast to exist. It would have pretty dramatic implications for our field.”
—Gaurav Khanna, professor of physics and director of the URI Center for Vector-Borne Disease and the Tick Encounter Resource Center

On the effectiveness of treating clothing with permethrin to protect against tick-borne diseases including Lyme disease:

“We’ve done tests with clothing, and we can watch the ticks fall off and die. So there is good scientific evidence that this works and it actually works pretty well.”
—Thomas Nather, professor of entomology and director of the URI Center for Vector-Borne Disease and the Tick Encounter Resource Center

On the value of increased fat stores and the many fascinating ways birds’ bodies change to prepare for seasonal migration:

“Flying is the most energy-intensive form of locomotion. But it’s also more efficient if you want to go farther, faster. You actually get better fuel economy when you use fat as fuel for a flying animal compared to a runner.”
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On a paper that, if proven correct, would not only challenge Einstein’s theory of general relativity but also prove the existence of near-extremal black holes:

“We would love to know if nature would even allow for such a beast to exist. It would have pretty dramatic implications for our field.”
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Marc Parlange joined a project to find sources of pollutants causing health issues in Baltimore. "Young people were having asthma and breathing problems, and I was really trying to understand the air quality and air movement around the city," he remembers about the massive effort sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency. Getting to the bottom of such a complex issue, he discovered, required many different types of experts, all working together. "You needed community leaders, environmental chemists, transportation engineers, and people like me—people working on the atmosphere," he says.

Parlange learned something else from the experience: The best collaborators on the project were both generous in sharing their own information, and open to hearing and learning from the experiences of others. "What I found is that good researchers really take the time to explain things to you, but at the same time, appreciate what you bring to the table," he says. After five years of work, the group produced a report that identified sources of specific fine particles in the air, including breathable dust with various toxins, along with detailed explanations for where they were coming from—vital information that could be used by government officials to prioritize cleanup efforts and dramatically improve child health.

Incoming URI President Marc Parlange has spent his life working, exploring, and learning in every corner of the world. Born in Rhode Island, he’s returning as URI’s 12th president, with plans to challenge the state’s brightest minds to tackle the world’s biggest problems.

By Michael Blanding
Rhode Island. “You can do so much more if challenges in fisheries, climate change, wind networks of excellence that can deal with big ties, for example, to partner with others in ships in Indonesia. “But there are opportunities,” he says, acknowledging URI’s existing partnerships. “I’d like to roll up their sleeves, get together, and work on these tough problems.” He carried that lesson with him on an impressive university leadership career that’s taken him all over the world—to Nederland, British Columbia, and, most recently, Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, where he served as provost for the past four years.

This summer, he brings his experience and passion to Rhode Island, where he will become URI’s new president. Parlange hopes to harness URI’s depth of knowledge to tackle big issues. “Rhode Island is a global leader in ocean and marine sciences,” he says, acknowledging URI’s existing partnerships in Indonesia. “But there are opportunities, for example, to partner with others in Australia and Southeast Asia—to build deeper networks of excellence that can deal with big challenges in fisheries, climate change, wind energy, and so forth,” he says, speaking over a Zoom link from Australia before his move to Rhode Island. “You can do so much more if you have good friends in other countries.”

A GLOBAL CAREER

mong the immigrants who’ve made Rhode Island home were Parlange’s parents. In the 1950s, his father came to Rhode Island from France to study aero-space engineering at Brown University, while his mother came from Ireland to study at Bryant College (now Bryant University). “I can tell you exactly where they met in Providence—the corner of Power and Gano streets,” says Parlange, whose great-aunt and great-uncle owned a triple-decker there, which they rented out to students. “They lived on different floors in the same house.” When they married, they moved to France, where his father completed his Air Force service, and then to Connecticut, where Parlange grew up. Later, his parents relocated to Australia, where Parlange attended high school and Parlange enjoy the great outdoors at Wilson Promontory National Park in Victoria, Australia.

Parlange hopes to harness the University’s depth of knowledge to tackle big issues.

In the course of an hour-long conversation, Parlange ticks off areas in which URI could make an impact. “Rhode Island is rightly focused on oceanography, business, science, and arts, but there are a lot of topical areas where the University could work across fields on top problems. How are we going to genuinely transform to a clean energy system? That is going to have technical problems; it’s going to have social problems, it’s going to have behavioral work,” he says. “What are our cities going to look like in the future? What are our rural areas going to look like in the future? We’re going to do some bold things.”

As someone who has worked all over the world, he’s excited to return to Rhode Island, where he was born, and which, he believes, has a global perspective that suits his personality. “As a state of immigrants, it’s very welcoming of new people,” he says. “It’s a state in which the opportunity to connect people across disciplines—and to connect Rhode Island to other institutions around the world—could be amplified through those ideas, making URI even more attractive as a destination school for top students and faculty.”

Dr. Parlange’s global vision was developed during a lifetime of traveling the world and experiencing other cultures, says Margo Cook ’86, chair of URI’s Board of Trustees. “He is someone who can expand the University’s global impact, as well as strengthen its commitment as a partner in the vitality and economic development of the state.”

Parlange (back row, second from left) with some of his echohydrology research team in Burkina Faso. The research focused on the effects of climate change on agriculture in West Africa.

To be part of successful teams.”

The project was Parlange’s first experience with the amplifying power of a truly multidisciplinary effort in tackling a big, seemingly intractable challenge—and he never forgot it. “The thing I really love about universities is that they are places of depth in many different fields,” he says. “There are good people willing to roll up their sleeves, get together, and work on these tough problems.” He carried that lesson with him on an impressive university leadership career that’s taken him all over the world—to Nederland, British Columbia, and, most recently, Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, where he served as provost for the past four years.

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Parlange’s work caught the attention of Patrick Aebischer, a Swiss professor who worked at Brown University in the 1990s, and later served as president of the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), one of Switzerland’s two flagship technical universities. Aebischer was creating a new institute for environmental engineering, deac, when Parlange as director in 2004. Aebischer had grand plans for the university, reenvisioning it as a global hub for innovation—academia and industry—years before such ideas became mainstream. “Now every single university around the world is talking about it, but Aebischer did this 20 years ago,” Parlange says. “He wasn’t building a technology park, he was building a vibrant oasis for ideas and translational research, one that would have the highest expectations for quality research, at the research university. At UBC, he also conducted a number of field measurements of turbulence with his students. Parlange notes, “It was cold!”

AN INCLUSIVE ATTITUDE

Parlange took those lessons to heart in his next position as provost of the faculty of applied science at the University of British Columbia, starting in 2013. There he conducted a number of initiatives to open innovation hubs, combining technology and entrepreneurship—not new for any research university. At UBC, he also continued his own research, including a project in Burkina Faso that examined the effects of climate change on farming practices on the agriculture of West Africa—a topic for which he is now internationally known.

Fig. 1 | With the Apple Science School of Community and Regional Planning, we established, together with the Museum First Nation community, the first master’s program in Indigenous community planning. The graduates are in very high demand throughout British Columbia,” he says, adding that he is excited to see similar conversations happening with First Nations communities in Rhode Island. He notes the recently announced plans for the relocation of Rhode Island’s Tomaquag Museum—dedicated to educating the public about the history and culture of Rhode Island’s Indigenous people—to URI land near the Kingston Campus.

Parlange continued his global focus as provost and senior vice president at Monash University, Australia’s largest research university, starting in 2017. Based in Melbourne, Monash spans throughout the Pacific and Indian oceans, with campuses in Malaysia, China, Italy, and India, where graduate students split their time while conducting an international research project as part of a joint Ph.D program with the top-ranked Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. Having that kind of global reach is the only way that an institution can truly work on problems of climate change or international security that affect the entire world, argues Parlange, who hopes to expand similar global relationships at URI. “These are the deep, deep partnerships we could build,” he says.

At Monash, Parlange helped to spur some ambitious projects in areas such as antimicrobial resistance, AI and data science, new-generation building construction approaches, and better governance and policy: A new research endeavor in sustainability will examine the effects of climate change in Antarctica, some 2,000 miles across the Southern Ocean. The project involves multiple departments at the university, as well as a dozen other Australian universities and government agencies.

This past year, Parlange led another effort called the Melbourne Experiment, which examined all aspects of the city during the coronavirus pandemic, from air quality to the livelihood of street musicians. “We wanted to monitor and understand what happens when you shut down a city for an extended period of time,” says Parlange, who hosted up to 200 people every Friday for a Zoom meeting featuring speakers and discussions on the topic.

The people involved in the city’s pandemic response “had the best intentions,” Parlange says. “But they could have done better in terms of communicating with government to work together.”

He believes that his longtime experience as both a professor and an administrator, need to have been teaching and advising students—of all ages—for decades, would help him make connections with faculty and students to push through similarly bold initiatives. “I know what it is to get up at 4 o’clock in the morning to refresh what I’m going to say in an 8 o’clock lecture, or what it’s like to have worked for weeks on a proposal and be told there’s not enough money, so you’re not funded this year,” he says. “I think the university leaders need to have been academics, need to have been teaching and advising students—of all ages—for decades, so those students succeed. That empathetic part of a leader is important.”

He’s also looking forward to becoming part of the campus community. An avid sports enthusiast, he and his wife recently became fans of the St. Kilda Football Club (Saints), a Melbourne-based Australian rules football team. “We are in a city where that’s their unbelievable passion, and I’ve joined the Saints club,” he says, holding up a St. Kilda cellphone case. “It’s an incredible sport—it’s just creative chaos.” He’s eager now to cheat on the relatively more orderly—but no less exciting—URI basketball teams—particularly the women’s team, where six of the 12 players are URI students and one is the associate head coach are French. “I’m excited to meet them—and to wear a shirt that says URI Basketball, ” he says.

Parlange also plans to stay active at URI through biking, hiking, trail running, and sea kayaking. “One habit I’ve been picking up is running five miles a day and forth between his home and his office at Monash each day—since the president’s house is right in the middle of the URI campus. “I tell everybody that I will live 100 meters from my office, so I now run in the daylight with students, staff, and faculty,” he says, “enthusiastically Parlange, who wouldn’t want it any other way.

Being at the center of the action, combining people, connecting people, and helping spur them to achieve big plans, is exactly where he likes to be. “Every morning, I’ve been receiving the most fantastic emails from people at URI—with ideas, with energy, with enthusiasm—and they are ready to teach me about what they are doing,” he beams. “I hope those emails never stop.”

“The University leaders need to have been academics, need to have been teaching and advising students and seeing those students succeed. That empathetic part of a leader is important.”

—Marc Parlange

Parlange at the finish of the Sierre-Zinal, a 31K mountain race in the Swiss Alps. At Monash, Parlange was known for running to and from work. When asked if he will still keep up his running, he beams. “I’ll always be a runner!”

“We had Ph.D. students and under-graduates, faculty, deans, professional staff, alumni, government, industry,” he says. For more than a year, the sessions became a launching point for numerous research projects, including a study on the livability of the suburbs, an examination of racism toward Indigenous people, and a collaboration between public health, arts, and law faculty on domestic violence. Ironically, Parlange says, the venture became a way to deeply connect faculty members who had never met each other on campus, and pool knowledge and resources to examine issues that could have a long-term impact on urban planning and global sustainability goals. “It goes back to what I learned in Baltimore about respect, openness, sharing, and generosity,” Parlange says.
At URI, Domingo Morel ’98, Soljane Martinez ’98, Tammy Warner ’99, M.S. ’06, and Matthew Buchanan ’98, —all first-generation college students from underrepresented communities—became friends. None planned to be educators. But they all found themselves drawn to education, finding there a sense of purpose and a cause—the fight for equity and social justice—that needed their particular superpowers.

By Soljane Martinez ’98
Buchanan believes all students can learn, and that is a huge problem.

—Matt Buchanan

In 1994, Providence native Matt Buchanan ’98 received an envelope from URI—a letter of congratulations from the Talent Development (TD) program. “I cried. That was the first time I really felt like college was for me,” says Buchanan, now principal of Hope High School, on Providence’s East Side.

I didn’t really begin to think about college until my senior year. I was recruited by Gerald Williams and Brian Scott from Educational Talent Search, a program that identifies potential college students from disadvantaged backgrounds and helps them succeed in higher education. “It was history from there. I can’t thank those two men enough for believing in me and assisting me in the entire college process,” says Buchanan.

“I arrived at URI in the summer of 1994 as a broke Black kid from the projects—unprepared academically, financially, and socially for college. Friends and the TD program—which helps recruit and retain Rhode Island students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the majority of whom are students of color—got him through that first summer and the subsequent four years. “We made a pact to make sure we successfully finished the summer program, and we supported each other. Three out of four of us ’made it’ through the summer. We were roommates. My friends allowed me to be myself, and we were there for each other. They were my ultimate rock.”

Buchanan intended to major in education, but his plans changed. “I had taken a human development and family studies (HDFS) class during the summer and loved it, so I switched my major. I also took an Africana studies class and loved that, as well. I learned through my TD advisor that I could minor in Africana studies.”

TD proved to be Buchanan’s biggest support system at URI. “TD was—and is—a family to me. They believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself. They made sure I was ready for life after college. Because of TD, I had the best college experience ever,” says Buchanan proudly.

URI provided other opportunities for Buchanan. “I was a four-year member of Uhuru SaSa (Freedom Now) and that was amazing,” he says of URI’s first and oldest multicultural organization, established in 1972.

Buchanan has many vivid memories of URI, but two days stand out:

• June 21, 1997: “On the way to a Beach Boys concert, I met my wife, Diana Figueroa ’02, who was a freshman. Here we are 24 years later, married for 18 years with three beautiful children.”

• May 17, 1998: “My graduation from URI. The look on my family’s faces, especially my mom, is something I will never, ever forget.”

“Without their unwavering support and dedication, there’s no way I would be where I am,” says Buchanan. “My experience on that campus provided a sense of belonging. Those were by far the best four years of my life.”

Twenty-three years later, Buchanan’s journey has taken him on a road as winding and unpredictable as state Route 138. After URI, Buchanan held myriad jobs in education, including: guidance counselor, financial aid counselor, director of programming for foster children, and advisor and college counselor at The Met High School. He even returned to TD as a tutor for five years. In 2014, he became vice principal of Nathanael Greene Middle School in Providence. Buchanan—who most recently served as principal of Hope High School in Providence and will serve as the principal of Somerville High School in Massachusetts, beginning this summer—has always been focused on equity and ‘empowering white educators to fully embrace our Black and Brown students and all that comes with them and empowering students to advocate for themselves,' he says.

“Education is critical to the success of our Black and Brown students. Too many white educators come at our students from a sympathetic—as opposed to empathetic—standpoint. Our kids need the mindset of educators to change. A lot of educators don’t believe our students can learn, and that is a huge problem,” says Buchanan, who considers himself to be ‘tough but understandable,’ because of his shared experiences with his students.

He also acknowledges his role as a parent. “I am fully engaged in my children’s education,” Buchanan says. “I communicate my expectations with my children and also with their teachers. I know what questions to ask, how to advocate for my children, and I have the ability to hold educators accountable.”

As a parent and an educator, Buchanan hopes to have a long-term impact on the education of young people. “I hope my legacy is doing what’s best for students—using data to make decisions that serve our students and families,” he says. “I want my legacy to be that I have done whatever it takes to guide these students to greatness.”

Buchanan holds an M.Ed. in educational leadership from Rhode Island College.
“It was always frustrating to me. I felt that my teachers in-state saw me and my friends as intelligent and capable of going to college,” says Morel, who is Black and Latino. He says he experienced “cultural shock” when he began at URI in 1994.

“It was my first time attending classes and living in a community where people of color were not in the majority. Eventually, my roommates and I adjusted and made friendships that help sustain me today,” Morel says.

Like Buchanan, Morel changed majors early. “I initially wanted to study marine biology,” he says. “But it only took one class for me to realize that it was not what I really wanted. I decided on JHDC because I wanted to do something related to counseling.” He, too, credits TD for providing “the greatest source of support and mentorship.”

Morel planned to attend Howard University to pursue a master’s degree in social work after URI, but financial constraints changed that plan. He joined the admissions team at Rhode Island College for four years before returning to TD; this time as an academic advisor and recruiter, where he stayed for the next seven years.

During that time, Morel became involved in a number of community organizations, including Latino Dollars for Scholars. He also co-founded the Latino Policy Institute, which stimulates public policy discourse by training and communicating the Latino experience in Rhode Island. “We helped get in-state tuition for undocumented students attending the state institutions of higher education in Rhode Island and published a report on the state of education for Latinos in Rhode Island,” he shares proudly.

Morel completed his Ph.D. in political science at Brown, and in 2016, he joined the political science faculty at Rutgers.

Morel, who lost his wife, Lisa Abreu, ‘01, when they were both students at URI, has two daughters. When it was time to decide where to go to college, Warner, who was accepted to four of the five schools where she applied, chose URI—the only in-state school. “I chose to attend URI,” she says, “because I knew that I would be part of a caring and supportive community through TD.”

Despite the current state of education, nation-ally and locally, Morel maintains a positive outlook. “I think our greatest power is the ability to bring people together to address the challenges our communities experience,” he says. “My wish is that we would be able to do more of that.”

Morel holds an M.A. in counseling from Rhode Island College, an M.A. in political science from Brown, and a Ph.D. in political science from Brown. He is the author of Takeover: Race, Education, and American Democracy, which examines the implications of state takeovers of school districts in racialized communities.

Commissioner Tammy Warner’s Superpower: OPTIMISM

Warner’s personal educational experience gives her a unique perspective and fuels her belief that education can change lives.

College was not an option for Tammy Vargas Warner ‘99, M.S. ‘06, it was an expectation. “It was my first time attending classes and living in a community where people of color were not in the majority. Eventually, my roommates and I became ‘someone great.’ It was a lot of pressure. However, in all honesty, it was as much my dream as it was theirs,” says Warner, the assistant commissioner of postsecondary education for the state of Rhode Island.

Warner—who, like Morel, was born in the Dominican Republic—witnesses, recognizes, and appreciates the long-lasting sacrifice her parents—both professionals in their home country—had to make when they moved their family to Rhode Island in 1984 to escape political turmoil, and began working in the factory assembly lines for minimum wage.

“I knew that I could not let them down,” says Warner. She enjoyed learning, attending primarily majority-minority-schools throughout K–12 in Providence. While there were a few positive experiences, “most of them were negative,” she says. “I was always a good student. But I was teased for being the ‘teacher’s pet’ and I struggled socially. I became a cheerleader in high school to be more social, so try to fit in. It was enough to get by,” she recounts.

When it was time to decide where to go to college, Warner, who was accepted to four of the

Four years later, in 2003, Warner was oversee-ing human resources in a small, local textile firm while taking business courses part time. “I thought I had everything I wanted, but I found myself wondering if I had settled,” she says.

A friend working as an academic advisor at the Community College of Rhode Island encouraged Warner to apply for an advisor position. She did. She was hired and soon began researching related graduate programs.

“I loved the new job,” says Warner. “It was incredibly fulfilling to work with adult students. I found that I could relate to many of these students—students of color, single par-ents with small children, working professionals—all looking to improve themselves in order to improve the lives of their families.”

Warner quickly realized she wanted to work in higher education. She enrolled in the college student-organized master’s degree program at URI the following year, where, after serving in advising roles at CCRI and URI, and in an academic program director role at URI, she served as assistant dean from 2016–2020.

Warner’s unique educational journey fuels her belief that education is the great equalizer, offering individuals access to upward mobility, financial stabili-ty, and improved health—for themselves and future generations.

Her firstborn, now 26, served as inspiration for her dissertation on college access. He decided early on that college wasn’t for him, which came as a sur-prise to Warner. She later learned that negative class-room interactions had created academic self-doubt and anxiety in her son.

“It was the same story I had heard countless times from students of color I’d encountered in higher education,” says Warner.
When she learned that her son shared those experiences, it became personal. It was the push Warner needed to dive deeper into researching a more complex phenomenon: racial microaggressions in the classroom environment.

“It is not something humans are born with,” Warner explains. “Rather, it is a behavior, a mindset that is learned and reinforced in a variety of systemic ways.”

“My work has only just begun,” says Warner, who is now Rhode Island’s assistant commissioner for postsecondary academic and student affairs. “My work is fueled by my optimism in humankind, in our ability as a people to someday learn to appreciate our individual strengths, respect and accept each other’s differences, lean on our similarities to build community, craft shared goals, and work collectively for the betterment of our entire society. I think my belief in people is part of my legacy.”

Warner holds an M.S. in college student personnel from URI and a Ph.D. in higher education administration from University of Massachusetts, Boston.

And My Superpower: FORESIGHT

I see a future in which all students have the opportunity to grow and develop to have a positive and successful educational experience.

My mother is a high school graduate, my father an eighth grader. When I was 6, I decided I wanted to be a surgeon. I quickly mastered English and excelled academically and socially. At 16, I went to my first college fair—yet still spoke only Spanish until I began kindergarten. I was a quintessential middle-schooler, juggling his blue-collar job and young family. We moved around a lot. I was a middle-class kid, but still under a strict upbringing. Back then, Rhode Island seemed a world away from New York City.

URI provided support in some unexpected ways. For instance, admissions officer Frank Santos Jr., who called me after reading my admission application, became my “URI dad.” One of my first stops when I arrived on campus was to meet him. I ended up landing a work-study job in the Office of Admission with Santos.

My care and encouragement kept me at URI when the challenge of going from city girl to rural college girl seemed too much. I missed the hustle and bustle of the city and hopping on a subway at any time of day or night. At URI, I was without a car and felt alone.

I joined clubs and met people who have become family in the 27 years since. I became a tour guide, a student senator, president of the Latin American Student Association, and eventually the editor-in-chief of The Good 5 Cent Cigar.

And I did something I swore I’d never do—I pledged a sorority. Sigma Lambda Upsilon/Siglas Latinas Unidos Sorority Inc. was not your typical sorority. The culturally based national organization was the perfect mix of philanthropy and discipline—best described as Girl Scouts meets military.

We wore uniforms, walked in formation, and practiced social probation—no partying or hanging out in between classes. It was all business: academics and community service. We were still little girls, but the walls at URI had become our home.

The women who became my hermanas (sisters) have been there for me for everything—weddings, funerals, births, educational growth, and career promotions.

URI was a transformational time in my life. Like Princess Diana of Themyscira—I Wonder Woman—I had to blend into society outside of my homeland. I acclimated to new people, customs, and traditions, and learned skills that have served me as my arsenal over the decades.

While I didn’t become a news anchorwoman, I became a journalist on a different track—print. I landed a job at The Providence Journal straight out of URI before heading back to my Themyscira, New York City, as a personal finance reporter for The Wall Street Journal in 2000. A year later I changed tracks again.

I was accepted to the New York City Teaching Fellows Program, which called upon people in diverse careers to bring their skills into the highest-need schools in the city. I simultaneously earned my master’s degree in teaching third and fourth grade in Brooklyn, the same borough in which I’d attended high school.

Just four months prior, I’d left The Wall Street Journal to pursue my master’s and subsequent teaching. Our offices were located on floor 11 of One World Financial Center—ground zero.

The pain of 9/11 was too much. I decided New York City was not where I wanted to raise children. I changed my work and moved to Rhode Island to put down roots.

In 2003, I joined a young charter school in Providence: Highlander, where teachers, students, and parents were a team, a family. I stayed 15 years, almost giving birth to my youngest in the school’s halls.

I honed my teaching craft, reconnected with URI friends, and built networks, evolving as an educator and social justice advocate. I specialized in World War II, genocide, and Holocaust studies—a passion inspired by a course taught by Professor Robert Weisbord at URI. In 2014, I was selected as one of 25 teachers from around the world to travel to Poland to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, an experience that changed my perspective on life.

After many years teaching, I wanted to impact students beyond the classroom. That led me to the Principal Residency Network, which prepares aspiring leaders to champion educational equity and innovation to improve student achievement. As if that wasn’t enough, I concurrently enrolled in Johnson & Wales’ Educational Leadership doctoral program.

From 2016–2020, I committed myself to my doctoral work. While completing my doctorate, I was a classroom teacher and dean of culture and students, and an elementary school principal, finally starting my own educational consulting business. On Friday, March 13, 2020 (as if that isn’t enough of a dance with superstition), I successfully defended my dissertation, hours before the state, and essentially the world, shut down operations due to COVID-19.

Currently, I’m the education coordinator at the Annenberg Institute, where I coordinate Brown University’s K–12 engagement programs, facilitating partnerships aiming for equitable opportunities for Rhode Island’s underserved students.

My URI education has been the catalyst that has sparked every professional opportunity I’ve had. It has allowed me to serve students, families, and entire communities. I hope that the legacy I leave behind is one that all children—regardless of zip code or skin color—are given the tools to have a positive and successful educational experience.

I’m proud to be part of this incredible group of educators. We were brought together at URI, where our shared commitment to transforming education and our successful careers were launched.

Individualy, the work we do has enabled us to impact the entire education spectrum— from K–12 to academia, and from policy to practice. A principal inspiring young adults, a commissioner overseeing academic program quality for Rhode Island’s post-secondary education, a faculty member bringing to light a faulting system and providing a framework for improvement, and an education coordinator helping bridge the needs of districts with the resources of higher education.

Fueled by conviction, insight, optimism, and foresight—and by our collective faith in the power of education—my fellow educators and I stand united and firm in our beliefs and actions: We will always fight to conquer the injustices of inequitable education.

“Everyone should have the chance to receive the best educational services, resources, and opportunities—regardless of zip code or skin color.”

—Soljane Martinez

Martinez holds an M.Ed from CUNY, College of Staten Island, and an Ed.D in educational leadership from Johnson & Wales.

I’m proud to be part of this incredible group of educators. We were brought together at URI, where our shared commitment to transforming education and our successful careers were launched.

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A sophomore who was the first female football player on her high school team. A senior who loves to cook chicken piccata and dreams of flying helicopters. A lieutenant colonel returning to his alma mater to lead the next generation of Army officers in their training. They’re all a part of the University of Rhode Island’s Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program, and on this particular Friday morning, they’re all working together to get over a wall.

“Beat the wall! Beat the wall!” a group of camouflage-clad cadets chants as one attempts to scramble over a slanted wooden wall structure planted in sand.

It’s a cold but bright day at a field training exercise (FTX) event at Joint Base Cape Cod in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, and a bitter wind chafes the slivers of exposed faces peeking out from behind the cadets’ face masks.

The cadet climbing the wall, Aaliyah Thomas ’24, gets one leg up, hooking her foot over the top, and struggles to lift her body over the horizontal edge. “You got it!” “There you go!” her compatriots shout in encouragement as Thomas finally makes it over the edge. Cheers erupt, and another cadet’s voice breaks in over the din, “Can I go again?”

A short walk away, cadets from URI, Salve Regina University, Roger Williams University, and a visiting group from Providence College, work together to accomplish a series of tasks in a roofless complex.

“They have to get the cadets across those two planks of wood and bring that box with them, then disassemble everything, all without touching any of the red,” says Lt. Col. Cornelius “Tad” Granai ’00, URI professor of military science. In front of him, two cadets sit on the planks, which wobble on the suspended bars they rest on. “Touch red, you’re dead,” Granai explains, gesturing to the painted red metal. He is being figurative, of course—nobody is going to die from touching a metal pole that’s been painted red. But maneuvering the group through the obstacles to accomplish the designated task is essential training for these young cadets, many of whom will go on to commission as second lieutenants upon graduation, and possibly move through the ranks beyond that.

Lt. Col. Granai walks over the icy wooden platform to observe another group that’s attempting to get everyone over a large wall.

“When I was here at URI, I actually played club hockey and they still have the same coach, Coach Augustine,” Granai says, laughing. “And it’s been a dream come true returning to my alma mater.”
Granai’s role as professor of military science, a position he took over last summer, is in charge of the ROTC program (URI’s program also includes students from Roger Williams University and Salve Regina University). On a more granular level, it also means recruiting and retaining top cadet talent, managing the other military personnel in the program (known as the cadre), teaching training courses, and helping make each cadet the best leader they can be.

“Our goal is to produce second lieutenants for the Army, whether they’re Army Reserve, National Guard, or active duty. We have a responsibility to commission 15 cadets,” Granai says. “But it’s really more than just the quantitative goal. It’s also about the quality of those cadets.”

There is a long list of accomplished military personnel who have sprung from the ranks and file ROTC battalions at URI. “We have a four-star general, we have a couple three-star generals, a few two-stars, one-star, a whole bunch of us colonels,” says retired Col. John Petrella ’68. Petrella is president of the URI Army ROTC Alumni Chapter and attended URI back when two years of military service was a requirement.

“URI was always my school of choice. I’m a Rhode Islander,” Petrella says. “And I joined ROTC because it was mandatory, but I just joined ROTC because it was mandatory, but I just joined because I had to. I didn’t have any interest in it, but I did it. And I did it do either of those things.”

Like Petrella, he joined ROTC because it was mandatory, but came to love it. “My dad was in the Rhode Island National Guard after WWII, but we weren’t a big military family,” LaPorte says. “So I knew very little about the Army, but I liked ROTC, and I think what attracted me to staying in it was that I was going to be a part of something bigger than myself.”

After graduating, LaPorte left the quiet village of Kingston to start a military career that would take him around the world. “I graduated from URI on a Saturday, and on Sunday, Judy and I packed up all our belongings in one car and left to be in the Army—and we were in the Army for 38 years,” he says. He rose to the rank of four-star general, the highest rank achievable in the Army, commanded the 1st Cavalry Division and the 3rd Armored Corps, and from 2002 to 2006 was commander of the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and the United States Forces in Korea.

While his military career took him from Kingston to Vietnam, to Germany and to various bases in the United States and Korea, he still remembers his time at URI and how it shaped who he became.

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In addition to field training events, like this one on Cape Cod, some cadets (those with scholarships who contract to serve with the Army) do physical training at 6 a.m. three times a week when school is in session.

"I think URI has done some really great things," LaPorte says. "I love going back to the campus, and I always tell my wife, 'I love walking across the Quadrangle knowing that I have no requirements, no exams, I don't have a paper due.'" He laughs. "I can get a cup of coffee and go sit on a bench and not worry about anything. It's the best feeling."

FAST-FORWARD TO TODAY, AND the spirits of those who walked the Quad, laughed with friends, loved their families, and fought battles for their country live on in the newest ROTC recruits.

First-year cadet Madison Wuttke ‘24 bursts with excitement during FTX training, her helmet slightly askew but her smile wide when she takes off her mask for a sip of water.

Wuttke, who is double majoring in engineering and French and is part of the National Guard, joined ROTC largely because of scholarship opportunities, and was surprised how much she enjoyed it. "ROTC was appealing because I could have a normal college experience while being in the military and getting my degree," Wuttke says. "It's not like going to West Point or a military academy, where your whole life is military; it just makes up a small portion of my life here, whereas it'll make up a bigger portion of it when I graduate."

As part of the newest group of cadets, Wuttke has felt welcomed by older peers and has been inspired by their leadership. "Our seniors kind of end up leading everyone else in the battalion," she says. "When we run things like this FTX, that's all organized and put together by the seniors. So the cadets are giving them the opportunity to lead an entire battalion."

One of those seniors is cadet Charles "Charlie" Dumas ’21, a mechanical engineering major.

On this cold day on Cape Cod, the towering, 6-foot-9 Dumas is one of the tallest of those cheering for cadet Thomas as she scrambles over the inclined wall. He sees encouraging his fellow cadets and helping them succeed as a major part of becoming a leader in the military, and in life.

"There's a different set of rules and a mindset that, as a good leader and role model, you're expected to hold yourself to. You have to make sure that you do, because people see and look up to you," Dumas says. "So you have to be ready to go at all times."

Part of the reason why Dumas, who is from Hopkinton, Massachusetts, decided to join the ROTC program at URI is because of his experience at an Army-sponsored program called Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science, or GEMS.

"It was, frankly, a sort of nerd camp for middle school kids," Dumas says, laughing. "He fell in love with how they taught STEM and saw how much the military contributed to the fields.

"That camp showed me all the opportunities in STEM that are available to the Army," Dumas says. "Eighty to 90% of the people there were civilians, but they had access to government and Army-funded technology and projects. It was really cool, and I decided to join ROTC so I could have that Army background and apply my engineering interest to that."

After graduating, Dumas hopes to join the aviation branch and fly helicopters, for which he shares a passion with his dad. "Since I was little, I was flying RC helicopters," he says. "And my dad just loves helicopters. If he hears one, this man will pull the car over and look up into the sky."

Dumas hopes, one day, to be in one of those helicopters his dad pulls over to see. But beyond ROTC as a means of building a future in engineering and fulfilling a familial dream of flying, Dumas has come to love the program, in a large part because of the support the cadets give each other.

"Thinking back on the recent FTX training session on the Cape, Dumas says he was so impressed by the effort his contemporaries put forward. "It was super impressive being there and seeing everyone work together to get their tasks done. It was really cool even to simply see that inclined wall, and sometimes you get these really short cadets and they would just look at it like it was impossible," he says. "But then, when you're yelling and cheering and helping them, and they just drive through and get it—it's just such a little thing, but it's also a big thing."

FOR ROTC ALUMNI, SEEING THE newest generation of cadets, like Dumas, graduate and commission is like stepping into the past; it reminds them of their own journeys and how integral ROTC was to their success.

"It's extremely rewarding every year to sit there in the front row as we commission all these young second lieutenants. The first thing I always say to my classmate beside me is, 'Did we look that young?'" says Petrella, laughing. "I look back now and I have lifelong friendships with people I've served with. We stay very close, because when you're in a foxhole with somebody, you get to know him pretty well."

LaPorte adds, "We like seeing the young cadets, and we realize that we are role models for these young men and women. If they see us and talk to us and share our thoughts with them, we are just building a better community at URI and a better ROTC program."

For Jeannette Riley, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, which houses URI’s military science program, ROTC is a perfect example of what the University in its entirety aims to do: Produce strong leaders who go on to make a difference in the world.

"The team that leads the ROTC is very focused on developing the next generation of leaders for the Army. They run a very strong, rigorous program that ensures the cadets are successful in their academic programs, as well as in the demanding physical training required. They also collaborate with other ROTC programs throughout the country. So just the way the ROTC program operates is very effective," she says. "And you know, these students, as you see when you go to the awards ceremony at the end of the year, these students excel."

Cadets work together to “beat the wall” during field training exercises, where there’s an emphasis on teamwork.
When an eruption triggered a portion of Krakatau, a volcano on the island of Anak Krakatau between Java and Sumatra, to collapse into the sea just before Christmas 2018, it caused a tsunami that struck the coast of Indonesia with waves up to 36 feet high, killing 420 people and displacing 40,000 more from their homes. It also caused URI faculty members—tsunami expert Stephan Grilli, professor of ocean engineering, and volcanologist Steven Carey, Ph.D. ’83, emeritus professor of oceanography—to spring into action.

Using tide gauges, satellite images, and photographs, Grilli created a computer model showing how part of the southwest side of the volcano slid into the water and generated the tsunami, while Carey and colleagues from the United Kingdom estimated the volume of the collapse based on radar images. This data allowed them to test ideas and validate other models to better prepare the United States for future tsunamis.

“We have seismic sources, volcanic islands, and underwater landslides in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans that could cause tsunamis to hit our coastlines,” says Grilli. “So we’re creating tsunami simulations and maps to show the potential inundation we could face.”

Grilli and Carey are among more than a half-dozen URI faculty members who pay close attention to natural disasters around the world and conduct research aimed at better understanding these phenomena. Their efforts, and those of numerous alumni, are also helping to forecast and prepare for future disasters.

Targeting Tsunamis

A major tsunami that struck Papua New Guinea in 1998 was what Grilli calls his “eye-opener.” Since then, he has studied tsunamis around the globe, historic and modern, and he co-led the first international expedition to investigate the cause of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed 230,000 people. He says tsunamis are usually triggered by earthquakes that cause the seafloor to shift upward, forcing the ocean surface to move up and creating a tsunami wave. Underwater landslides also commonly cause tsunamis.

“You don’t need a big earthquake to trigger a landslide,” says Grilli, who collaborates with his wife, associate research professor Annette Grilli, on many of his projects. “If you have sediment destabilized on the continental shelf, a little bit of seismicity could cause it to slide down the shelf slope.”

Although the East Coast isn’t at high risk for a tsunami, the Grillis work with the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program to model potential tsunamis in the region and create inundation maps so local emergency management agencies can better prepare for all possibilities. (Juan Horrillo, M.S. ’97, associate professor of ocean engineering at Texas A&M University, is creating similar models and maps for the Gulf of Mexico.) They also conducted tsunami hazard assessments of U.S. nuclear power plants following the tsunami that caused a meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan.

Annette Grilli’s role in these studies has been to assess the variability of wave impacts on the shoreline based on the tsunami’s source—the movement of the seafloor, the landslide, or whatever else propagated the waves—to quantify local risk. Her interest in shoreline impact complements other work she does modeling the effects of severe storms on coastlines and conducting risk assessments for coastal structures.

“Tsunamis are extreme events, but rare, while severe storms are more frequent—and their frequency is increasing,” she says. “People are still buying real estate along the water, and the risk to those buildings from sea-level rise, storm surge, and wave run-up is growing.”

By Todd McLeish

Anticipating the Next BIG ONE


Such disasters are the stuff of our greatest fears and, at the same time, our intense fascination. When they strike, we are reminded that, in the words of celebrity astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, “Here on Earth, we’re still at the mercy of nature.” That’s why URI oceanographers, engineers, and geoscientists are at the forefront of research focused on predicting and mitigating damage from the next big one.

By Todd McLeish
Volcanoes—Past and Future

Since volcanic eruptions can play a role in generating tsunamis, Grisli occasionally collaborates with Carey, who has been conducting research on volcanoes since his days as a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Oceanography in the 1970s and 80s. When Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980, Carey and Haraldur Sigurdsson, emeritus professor of oceanography, hiked into the volcano, and Carey has been studying and documening the explosive nature of the eruption and the total destruction it caused. Now he is focused on underwater volcanoes.

“I look at the geologic record and the deposits from older eruptions and try to reconstruct the source characteristics of the eruption,” says Carey. “To do that, we study recent volcanoes and the kinds of deposits they produce to get an understanding of eruptive processes that take place.”

About 500 volcanoes on land have been active during modern times, mostly around the Ring of Fire, which encircles the Pacific Ocean. A handful of eruptions may be happening at any one time, each usually lasting for weeks or months. Two kinds of eruptions typically occur, according to Carey. Explosive eruptions generate large columns of volcanic ash that can disrupt air travel and cause temporary climate cooling for a year or more. They also generate pyroclastic flows that can move at very high speeds. Effusive eruptions, on the other hand, generate slow-moving lava flows that pose little risk to humans and no significant gas or ash.

His most exciting detective work has been at the site of the 79 A.D. eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Italy, where his investigations with Sigurdsson helped unravel details about the characteristics of the eruption that buried the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. That’s also the volcano Carey is most concerned about. It has erupted more than 50 times since it first erupted in 79 A.D., and he says that the longer it sits idle, the larger the next eruption is likely to be. And because more than a million people live nearby, another big eruption could result in a terrible loss of life.

“These eruptions are extraordinarily hazardous, so we need to be able to predict them accurately,” says Carey. “And if there’s a big eruption, it’s important to be able to estimate the size of the eruption and how it will affect people.”

Carey says that about 70 percent of volcanic activity occurs underwater, so the eruptions are seldom seen or reported. He has studied underwater volcanoes around the world, including the Kolumbo volcano in the Aegean Sea and the Kvitøn Jenny volcano in the West Indies. His latest project focuses on an underwater volcano off Baja California that produces lava flows that are the equivalent of a sixth volcano observatory that responds to volcanic crises in developing countries throughout the world. “We have also begun to detect evidence of a sixth volcano observatory that responds to volcanic crises in developing countries throughout the world,” says Carey. “Congress recently reauthorized the National Volcano Early Warning System, so we will be busy for the next five years doing monitoring peaks on very-high-thrust and high-thrust volcanoes in the U.S. and its territories and augmenting vola- monitoring networks where they need to be modernized,” he added.

Whether a particular volcanic system will produce a large explosive eruption or a less-violent effusive eruption is one of the underlying issues in URI oceanography professor Katherine Kelley’s research. She aims to understand why the solid matter inside the planet’s mantle melts to create the liquid magma that rises up to the surface and erupts at volcanoes.

“One of the conditions that is extremely favorable to the creation of magma happens when the inside of the Earth gets hotter,” says Carey. “When water from the ocean layer is brought down into the Earth’s interior through plate tectonics, it causes the interior rocks to melt in a chemical reaction similar to when you add salt to icy roads in winter.” And the more water in the magma, the more explosive the eruption.

By studying the magma ejected from volcanoes—as she is now doing with volcanoes in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska and off the coast of Mexico—Kelley can reconstruct the eruptive process and calculate the water content of the liquid before it erupted. “By knowing what a certain volca- nic system might have done in the past, it helps us look forward to what kind of behavior we can expect in the future,” she says.

Hurricane Warning

While it is difficult to predict exactly when and where a major volcanic eruption will take place, it is getting easier to forecast hurricanes, thanks in part to the modeling efforts of URI oceanography professor Isaac Ginis. Recent improvements in hurricane forecasting largely to a better understanding of the role the ocean plays in determining the path and intensity of hurricanes, which has been the topic of Ginis’ research for more than 25 years.

“Hurricanes draw energy from the ocean, and if the ocean temperature is higher, then hurricanes become more intense,” he says, noting that as the chang- ing climate warms the ocean, hurricanes will continue to grow in intensity. “We’re also seeing that hurricanes are intensifying more rapidly, going from a Category 1 to a Category 3 or 4 in a day or two. And that’s a big concern for forecasters who want to issue hurricane warnings in advance of landfall.”

Ginis says hurricanes are now producing more rainfall than they used to, as well. “Rain comes from evaporation from the ocean, and the evaporation rate is a function of ocean temperature,” he says. “When the water warms, the more evapo- ration. So hurricanes are getting more moisture from the ocean, and because of the higher air temperatures, they can hold more water in the atmosphere and produce more rain. That will continue as global warming continues.”

Ginis’ hurricane models, which incorporate these complex interactions between the ocean, atmosphere, and storms, have been used by the National Hurricane Center to predict hurricanes and typhoons in the Atlantic and Pacific. His models are also being used by the U.S. Navy to predict storm intensity wherever Navy ships travel.

In recent years, Ginis has also worked with the Department of Homeland Secu- rity to improve predictions of the hazards that hurricanes can cause to infrastruc- ture when they make landfall. “One of the major challenges in predicting hazards is that you need to make predictions of wind and flooding at specific geographical loca- tions, like bridges or hospitals,” he says. “General weather and hurricane prediction models aren’t specific enough for helping emergency management agencies make decisions.”

Many of Ginis’ former graduate stu- dents are now applying this research in a variety of contexts. At AIR Worldwide, for example, Richard Yablonsky, Ph.D. ’99, Michael Baer, Ph.D. ’14, and Austin Blair, Ph.D. ’16, work together to develop analytical tools that insurance companies use to assess their potential risk from hur- ricanes and other natural disasters.

“Our role is focused primarily on the storm surge that’s produced by hurricanes and typhoons in the U.S. and winter storms in the U.K.,” says Yablonsky, a certified national tornado chaser. “We’re building computer models to simulate those types of events and give guidance as to what the risk is in a particular location. We give them the best data possible so they can make more informed decisions about what properties to insure and how much to charge.”

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The Holy Grail of Earthquake Studies: Prediction

In an active year, there may be more than 20 tropical storms or hurricanes in the Atlantic and far fewer in the Pacific and Indian oceans. But there are likely many thousands of earthquakes each year, most barely detectable by even the most sensitive instruments and usually caused by shifts in the Earth's tectonic plates. Predicting when an earthquake will occur is what URI oceanography professor Yang Shen calls the holy grail of earthquake studies.

“We can't predict exactly when it's going to happen, but we have a good idea for intermediate-term or long-term predictions,” says Shen. “We can see the probability of a big earthquake occurring in a particular place, but we cannot say which year or which day it's going to happen.”

Shen has been interested in earthquakes since childhood, when a massive quake in China in 1976 killed 90,000 people. Since joining the URI faculty in 1998, he has studied earthquakes around the world, from Iceland to Easter Island and the Galápagos. In 2018, he deployed seismometers on the ocean floor off Hawaii to record the aftershocks from the eruption of the Kilauea volcano—which has been erupting off and on since 1983—to learn which fault system had been activated.

“We're still analyzing the data, but using all available data from land-based and offshore seismometers, we detected a lot of earthquakes, an order of magnitude more than were published by the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory,” he says. Using this data, he is now engaged in a project to use machine learning to detect and locate earthquakes faster and more precisely than ever before. This effort should reveal smaller earthquakes and unknown fault lines that could be precursors to major earthquakes.

Among his collaborators is Matt Wei, URI assistant professor of oceanography, who studies earthquake cycles—the interval, magnitude, and location of earthquakes that repeatedly rupture a particular fault. Because most faults on land produce strong earthquakes hundreds or thousands of years apart, an accurate record of the cycles on these earthquakes is not available, making it difficult to understand earthquake behavior. But some faults beneath the ocean can generate magnitude 6 earthquakes every three to five years, which allows scientists like Wei to study the seismic cycles at these faults to gather information that may produce strong earthquakes hundreds of kilometers thick, four or five times thicker than typical oceanic crust around the globe. He recorded the speed of seismic waves traveling through the Earth from earthquakes to create an image of the structure below the plate.

“We're trying to understand why this large plate was built, why it's so big, and why it's so weird compared to others,” Savage says.

Savage uses a similar methodology to study how the Earth's tectonic plates look under California or the East Coast to better understand the processes that are shaping the planet. Seismic data from the Middle East has even helped him develop models to monitor underground nuclear explosions and differentiate them from earthquakes.

“Some countries want to hide the fact that they're testing nuclear devices, but those events have particular characteristics that look like explosions rather than earthquakes,” Savage says. “When we measure them, there are uncertainties in how the waves propagate. Getting better estimates of how those waves move from one place to another helps us characterize those events better.”

Detecting slow earthquakes that occur beneath the ocean is especially challenging because it requires measuring the deformation of the seafloor down to the millimeter scale. Most scientists use a pressure sensor placed on the ocean bottom to detect movement on the seafloor, but it's difficult to separate tectonic movements from the changing ocean pressures. So Wei and Yang are using machine learning methods to better detect slow earthquakes from the seafloor pressure data, which may help in hazard assessments.

Not only can the seismic waves produced by earthquakes tell scientists about the characteristics of a particular earthquake, they can also be used to learn about other features of the Earth's structure. Brian Savage, associate professor of geosciences, partnered with Shen in using seismic data to learn why the oceanic crust in an area of the Western Pacific called the Ontong Java Plateau is about 35 kilometers thick, four or five times thicker than typical oceanic crust around the globe. He recorded the speed of seismic waves traveling through the Earth from earthquakes to create an image of the structure below the plate.

“We're trying to understand why this large plateau was built, why it's so big, and why it's so weird compared to others,” Savage says.

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“What Defines a Disaster?

Regardless of whether it's an earthquake, tsunami, volcano, hurricane, or climate change, what defines a disaster is its impact on people.

“The difference between a disaster and an interesting phenomenon is how it affects human life,” says Bonnie Epstein, Ph.D. ’99, who has taught a class on natural disasters at the Rhode Island School of Design for 11 years. “A flood where three people lose their home, that's a shame; but if 1,200 people lose their homes, that's more like a disaster. We measure it by the cost of what was lost, or by loss of life.”

Much of her class focuses on how human-built structures can either mitigate disasters or make them worse. Flooding from hurricanes, for instance, is often worse in areas where an abundance of pavement causes rainfall to quickly run into rivers rather than be absorbed into the soil and wetlands.

Among her more esoteric recommendations for preparing communities for natural disasters is to tap into community memories from previous disasters. One reason why the 2010 earthquake in Haiti was so destructive, she says, is that there had been an earthquake there since the 1770s, so people assumed that such an event could happen and no memory of what residents should do. A more powerful earthquake in Chile the same year had a lesser impact because communities there regularly undergo earthquake drills and other preparations.

“That's why I'm a fan of public memorials to certain disasters, like the plaques noting the high-water mark from the Hurricane of ‘38, Epstein says. ‘Even if you don’t discuss disasters with your neighbors, it's a reminder to pay attention.’“
1946
Adole (Goldberg) Eapo writes: “In reading the spring URI Magazine, I noticed there was no mention of anyone in Class Notes before the Class of 1954. Well, I am here from the Class of 1946! I am alive and well, now living in an independent facility in West Palm Beach, Florida. We came to West Palm in 1985, when my husband was transferred. Unfortunately he died in 1990. That is when I retired from teaching. I did a few more years of substitute teaching, then decided to do volunteer work. I volunteered for the State Attorney’s office in adult abuse, as well as for the American Lung Association. I was an usher for Kravis Center and Diama Works. And I volunteered for my condominium’s vice president, secretary, treasurer, and then president for over six years. Doing all of this on different days, of course, but all during the same years, kept me content and busy until the pandemic. If we have a reunion at the University this year, I do hope to come for my 75th. Let’s hear from more classmates from the early years!”

1947
Melvin Lipson of Newport Beach, CA, has been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from Heritage Pointe (Seniors Living in Jewish Tradition). Along with establishing Heritage Pointe he has also devoted time and energy to other worthwhile charities, including FOCUS, the Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County, and the Jewish Community Foundation Orange County. As an officer of the Jewish Federation of Greater Orange County, Mel is a leader in the successful campaign to build the first home for special needs adults in our Jewish community, resulting in the opening of the Mandel House.

1957
Lana (Palmer) Orphanides published a book of poetry, Searching for Angels, in 2015 through Anthem Press.

1975
Charles & Joan Frost, and his wife, Joan (Harke) Frost ’73 have been married for 51 years. They live in Maine with their 6th golden retriever, Sage.

1980
Robert Counts ’74, M.S. ’81, retired in 2020 after 37 years as a CPA to begin a new career as an author. In December 2020 he self-published Murder by Dinosaur, a detective mystery based on a title given to him by his wife (only the title—no story). Since then, he has published Aliens Don’t Believe in Us, a story from the point of view of one who visits his friend on Erota (Earth). Both titles are available on Amazon. A third book is in the works.

1982
John Palumbo, owner and publisher of Rhode Island Monthly magazine, has been elected to the Rhode Island Press Association Hall of Fame. He will be formally inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Press Association’s annual awards dinner on September 17, 2021 at the OmniProvidence “O” Club.

1979

1994
Dr. Thomas Salminen (Col. USAF Ret.) recently celebrated his 95th birthday.

From the Archives
In 1942, during World War II, the U.S. Army assigned Army Specialized Training Units to all colleges and universities with advanced ROTC programs (all land-grant universities had them). The Army Specialized Training Units augmented military science programs and helped meet wartime demand for junior officers and skilled soldiers.

1949
The Army Specialized Training Unit cadets on the Quad, circa 1949.

*CLASS NOTES*
Let your classmates know what you’re up to: Reunions, gatherings, career or academic updates, weddings and birth announcements, retirements, exhibition openings, travel, or your favorite URI memories.
Submit notes and photos by email to urimag@uri.edu or online at alumni.uri.edu.

1968
Col. William P. Babcock ’68, M.A. ’72, U.S. Army, retired, received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at URI’s 135th Commencement in May. Babcock served full time in the Rhode Island National Guard for 21 years, and volunteered for active-duty tours in Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2005. He retired as a brigade commander and is a founding member and first president of the URI ROTC.

1969
Roberta Sabella Mansfield ’69, M.L.S. ’72, see page 9

1970
Kathryn (Stellano) Ladd ’71, M.L.S. ’78, has been chosen as the 2021 CAACE (Connecticut Association for Adult & Continuing Education) Educator of the Year for her years of service to the field of adult education. She currently teaches United States Citizenship and GED Science and Math classes, in addition to being a trained National External Diploma Program (NEDP) assessor. In her nomination letter to CAACE, Dr. Mangano, Principal of the East Hartford Adult Education Program wrote, “Kathryn Ladd has spent her entire teaching career going above and beyond for her students. From working with expelled students, to those with disabilities, to attending the naturalization ceremonies of her students: Kathy always finds a way to help students succeed.”

1971
Robert Counts ’74, M.S. ’81, retired in 2020 after 37 years as a CPA to begin a new career as an author. In December 2020 he self-published Murder by Dinosaur, a detective mystery based on a title given to him by his wife (only the title—no story). Since then, he has published Aliens Don’t Believe in Us, a story from the point of view of one who visits his friend on Erota (Earth). Both titles are available on Amazon. A third book is in the works.

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1978
Andrea Davis ’78, M.A. ’91, writes, “As a local (South County, R.I.) surfer, swimmer, and ocean enthusiast who grew up in Narragansett, I am committed to doing something, however small, to combat our plastic problem. I created a sculpture—made from plastic waste collected on South County beaches—to raise awareness of how much we might try to reduce the plastic waste that proliferates, especially during the very busy summer months. The sculpture started out on display at Java Madness in Wakefield, and I am hoping to take it to local beaches this summer to raise awareness as people enjoy their days.”

1982
R. A. Counts ’74, M.S. ’81, retired in 2020 after 37 years as a CPA to begin a new career as an author. In December 2020 he self-published Murder by Dinosaur, a detective mystery based on a title given to him by his wife (only the title—no story). Since then, he has published Aliens Don’t Believe in Us, a story from the point of view of one who visits his friend on Erota (Earth). Both titles are available on Amazon. A third book is in the works.
John Gouin writes, “I was recently selected the first podiatrist in the history of the Veterans Health Administration to be a chief of surgical services.”

Lynne Kaplanowitz, HSAS, Montville, Maine, is the executive associate and training coordinator for Marie Family Planning, volunteer council member for Midcoast Conservancy, and former judge for the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame.

Margaret Fortudo is completing her residency in internal medicine at Roger Williams Medical Center after graduating from American University of Antigua College of Medicine last year. She returned to school to study medicine after a long career in nutrition. She earned a B.S. in food science and nutrition from URI in 1985 and a master’s degree from Florida International University.

Bonnie Epstein, Ph.D. ’99, received her undergraduate degree in geology/biology from Brown and her Ph.D. in geologic oceanography from URI. Her interests lie at the junction of science, art, and education. She founded the Rhode Island Museum of Science and Art (RIMOSA), a hands-on, interactive museum designed to inspire curiosity and encourage experimentation in older children and adults. Check out RIMOSA at rimosa.org and visit the museum on Westminster Street in Providence. They’d love to welcome URI alumni/veteran! Epstein also teaches design solution based bio/geo/chem courses at the Rhode Island School of Design. More from Epstein on page 43.

Tammy Warner ’99, M.S. ’06, see page 28

Kevin Lopes has been promoted to senior director of business development and innovation at ESPN, responsible for overseeing the company’s broader content business and innovation initiatives.

Sara Waldron writes, “Since graduating in 2006 I have lived in NC, SC, and now MA. I worked in the banking field for several years. I completed my masters in social work at Bridgewater State University in 2019. I loved my new career, working as a mental health clinician in Plymouth MA. I recently welcomed a baby boy, Logan, in December 2020. He has been the bright spot of our lives during the pandemic.”

Kristina Cinquegrana Petrelli writes the following in response to learning of the passing of William Klenk, professor emeritus of fine arts: “Oh my heart. Every painting I create, I stand back and contemplate ‘What would Klenk do?’ An inspiration and legend of the Fine Arts Center. I hope there will be a scholarship created in his name, or perhaps a new studio named after him. I have to go through all my work from his classes. Klenk was a standup guy, had the best laugh... God, I’m so saddened.”
Michelle Saunders, M.A. ’10, was named vice president, talent management, at HarborOne Bank. In this role, Saunders is responsible for building on the bank’s talent management team with a continued emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2011

Colin Giblin has been elevated to the position of vice president at Turtle Fur, a leading headwear and accessories brand in the outdoors, snow sports, and lifestyle markets.

Nate Menard has joined Verrill Dana, LLP in its Portland office as an environmental and energy law attorney.

2013

Olivia Dolphin, see page 50

Parker Kuklinski writes: I met my wife, Geri Kuklinski, Pharm.D., ’16, on the first day of orientation and we’ve been together since. URI holds such a special place in our hearts. We have so many amazing memories from our time there. We receive the URI magazine every season and check in on the alumni updates. The photo of Geri and myself with Rhody is from the URI 10 Under 10 award ceremony in 2019, where she received an award from the College of Pharmacy. We welcomed our future Rhody Ram, Eleanor Grace Kuklinski, on March 26, 2021. (See Births and Adoptions above.)

2014

Patrick Brown wrote to share that his company, Rent Sons, which he started just over four years ago, has changed its name to Surv, to reflect their commitment to building stronger communities through service. He adds that, to date, they’ve “given 1,000 people a job.”

Michael Bueti, Ph.D. ’14, see page 41

2016

Austen Blais, Ph.D. ’16, see page 41

Andrew Pilkington produced a feature film in collaboration with Zeno Mountain Farm. Andrew was both a producer and screenwriter. Best Summer Ever, a feature length musical, was shown at the 2021 SXSW Film Festival. More than half the cast and crew are people with disabilities. USA Today ranked the film among the top 10 in the 2021 SXSW Festival, and it received positive reviews from The Hollywood Reporter and Rotten Tomatoes.


When Olivia Dolphin ’13 was in third grade, her mother brought home a new book for her. The book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,* was about an orphan boy who went to wizard school. She had no idea then how, like an ancient prophecy waiting to spring forth, the book and its sequels would consume her life. “There was a chunk of time when it was just the first three books, and I would rotate between them,” she remembers. By the time the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* came out, she was attending midnight releases with fellow Potterheads, and contributing fan fiction to Internet sites about the battles of Harry, Hermione, and Ron against the forces of darkness. “There was this robust community where those of us who felt a little different, and preferred reading in the library to going to gym class, could find each other,” she says. “You could write fiction or songs and put them online and people would care.” She began volunteering at Harry Potter–themed conferences, sharing at open mics and fanfiction on Internet sites. “We try and uplift the voices that are not being heard and create a safe space for new writers and creators,” she says. Now on its fourth issue, the magazine publishes everything from original science fiction and fantasy to poetry. After graduating from URI, Dolphin earned a master’s in writing and publishing at Emerson College, and worked as a copywriter for insurance company Liberty Mutual as a user experience content strategist, which informs her creative work. “It helps me think critically about the functionality of the website and how users are going to feel when they hold this book.” Dolphin is now creating an anthology of her own poems with the working title, *Letting Go and Other Lessons I Didn’t Want to Learn.* She also released a song this past winter, “This Damn Christmas,” channeling the frustrations of the holiday season and how users are going to feel when they hold this book.

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When the Mirror Cracks
Nikoo K. McGoldrick ’84 and James A. McGoldrick, M.A. ’99, Ph.D. ’91
(2nd edition)
(2021)

The Data-Driven School: Collaborating to Improve Student Outcomes
Jason A. Pedersen ’12, Daniel M. Myerson, Joseph Kovaleski, and Benjamin Silberglit
(2020)

Collaborating to Improve Student Outcomes
Joseph Kovaleski, and Benjamin Silberglit
(2020)

High Country Justice: Caleb Marlowe Series #1
Robert D. Ballard, Ph.D. ’75, Hon. ’86
(2021)

Mission of the Kings
Michael Squatrito Jr. ’87, ’88
(2019)

Small of it During the COVID Pandemic
Christopher J. Dacey ’88, M.B.A. ’11
(2021)

Send in the Clones
Marvin Ginsburg ’60
(2020)
= SCENIC ROUTE =
Galilee Glow

The fishing village of Galilee, in Narragansett, R.I., is a familiar scene, especially if you’ve hopped the ferry from Galilee to Block Island. Rich Epstein ’91 captured the scene in dramatic sunset light. Epstein, who majored in theater and history, is a professional photographer and a realtor. See more on Instagram, @richepsteinphoto
Photo Caption Contest

Do you have a funny idea for a caption for this photo from the URI Archives? Email your caption to urimag@uri.edu or respond at uri.edu/magazine.

Submit entries by September 15, 2021

This photo from the URI Library Archives is dated February 27, 1952. The straightforward description is, “A picture of studio director Pauline Bregnan and William J. Toohey ’55 in the URI Radio Station room.” Your caption ideas and responses, URI Magazine readers, were anything but straightforward. In fact, they were quite creative.

Here are the winning captions, and a few other notable submissions.

SPRING WINNERS

WINNING CAPTIONS

“The Beatles? They’re no Kingston Trio. One-hit wonder for sure!”  
—Richard McCahey ’69

“It’s called Rock & Roll. It’s a fad that will never last.”  
—Michael Kenny ’81

RUNNER-UP

“So Larry says if you play this one backwards you’ll hear the name of every Dorr Hall resident...ever.”  
—Timothy Anderson ’97

Reader Janis Murray (wife of David Murray ’75) was inspired by this photo, along with the poetry story in the spring 2021 issue, to share a submission in verse:

“I am curious about you. Your smile captures my mind. I study vinyl for my own interest, Your attention surprising. Divine.”

Read the rest of Janis’ poem at uri.edu/magazine.

From URI’s first lady, the Rev. Lynn Baker-Dooley:

“I love this photo as proof that women were involved at our radio station in 1952, but I have to say, without that knowledge, this photo reeks of mansplaining. So the caption might read:

“Let me explain how this round thing works, honey.”

WRIU DJ John Austin Murphy, aka The Monsignor, submitted this caption:

“This record is perfect for your show on WRIU!”

Listen to The Monsignor’s show, Roots & Offshoots on WRIU (90.3 FM or streaming live at wriu.org), Friday mornings from 6–8.

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Tap into your network of 135,000+ Rhody Rams around the globe.

The alumni community is a powerful resource for alumni and students, and URI CareerConnect makes it easy to access by matching alumni advisors and advisees for one-on-one career conversations. It’s free and easy to connect using the built-in messaging and conference platform.

Give advice. Your experience can help a student or recent grad kick off a great career. Offer the advice you would have wanted to receive.

Get advice. No matter where you are in your career, someone else’s perspective is valuable. Connect with someone in your field to explore your next move.

URI.FIRSTHAND.CO
Torrent Forms

Mixed-media artist Sarah Tyson ’21 says she “draws inspiration from organic forms and patterns in nature,” which she likes to contrast with one of her favorite materials, nails. Tyson, who cites Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama and German artist Günther Uecker as inspirations, was selected by art department faculty for this year’s David Ketner Memorial Art Award for excellence in studio art.

Tyson received an undergraduate research grant to work with associate professor Ben Anderson on a public sculpture centered on climate change, which will be installed on the URI Kingston Campus.